

# Call Me Beth

*Hannah Wood*

She smiled down at me. "What a handsome little boy he is too"  
I cross my legs uncomfortably "I'm not handsome, I'm pretty" The words  
stumble out of my mouth, but they soothe the hot feeling in my chest.  
They all laugh as they stick the needle into my arm.

"Your hair's gotten very long honey," Mum says with a frown "Don't you want to  
cut it? Isn't it annoying? You might get lice or something"  
I look down "But all the other girls at school have it long"  
Mum sighs "But you're not a girl Benny" I flinch at my name.  
Because I feel like one

"You're so lucky Sissy," I say as I walk out of the dentist  
Ava looks down at me "Really? How come?"  
I shrug because I don't really know, I just wish I could wake up and be an Ava

"But Mummmm" I whine  
"No Ben" She pinches her nose "Why can you just do soccer or something?"  
"But-"  
"And take that dress off, we're heading to the doctors soon ok?" She doesn't wait  
for an answer  
I don't like doctors

In the waiting room, I flick through the magazines.  
"Whatcha looking at?" Ava peers over my shoulder, her arm in a pink cast  
I grin, showing her the flashy models. "What one do you want to be?"  
She thinks for a second, then points "That one"  
"What no fair! I wanna be that one" We both giggle until mum tells us to shush

I walk into Ava's room, trying not to itch my hands.  
"Hey" I like that she doesn't use my name. The computer lights up the red spots  
on her face.  
"What are you doing?"  
"Killing boredom. Oh, I have some more clothes for you" She smiles as I squeal.  
I dive through the pile. Oh yes, this is a good haul. Ava's always giving me  
clothes she doesn't fit anymore.  
She laughs, "Can I ask you something?"  
I nod  
"Ok well...do you sometimes think...do you feel like you're a girl?"

I don't even need to think, I just nod because it feels right. Ava won't laugh at me.

"Would you like me to call you another name then?"

"Yes!" Ava didn't laugh at me! "Yes please!" I think for a bit "Call me Beth!!!"

Ava smiles "Ok then Beth, my beautiful sister" We dance around the room, and she sings beth, beth, beth and I'm smiling because it feels so right.

I'm glad you don't have to go to the doctor for chickenpox.

"So Ben-

"It's Beth mum"

"Yeah, yeah, so Ava's going to go to the hospital for a bit"

I frown "But she's not sick"

Ava stands "Just tell her Mum"

"Excuse me, but I think he's a little bit young-

"Oh my GOD Mum, how many times do I have to say it! She is a she!! Her name is Beth and she is a girl, why can't you-

"Now who gave you the right to call my son-

"YOU'RE NOT LISTENING-

I slam the door, vision blurring as I run with my hands over my ears.

I don't want them taking Ava away

I'm eleven now, my mum says, so I can go to the doctor without her. She's going to visit Ava anyway. Apparently, I'll never be old enough for that.

"Excuse me, are you Ben Phillips? You're being called" I flinch, looking at the man next to me, and mutter thanks before following the doctor. I sit down in his office as he types. "So Ben...Wow, you've changed a bit" He points to a picture of four-year-old me. I had short hair then.

"My name's Beth, thanks for noticing that I'm not four anymore, and I prefer the pronouns she/her."

The doctor nods distractedly "Yup, I'll just go get the vaccines for you Ben...

I want to scream